

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Minutes of December 3, 2009

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A Meeting of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Lincoln High School, 135 Old River Rd., Lincoln, RI, and convened at 4:05 p.m.  
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In Attendance:

Robert Flanders, Anna Cano-Morales, Patrick Guida, Colleen Callahan, Betsy Shimberg, Amy Beretta.

Regent Angus Davis arrived at 4:40 p.m.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Gist updated the Board on the School for the Deaf and said that a full report would be given at the December 17 work session.

Public Remarks

John Welsh, CEO of Innovative Health Care Plans, spoke to the group about the "PAL" health initiative and urged board members to support his proposal along with the RI School Committee Association. He said that under the PAL plan, Rhode Island would save \$14 million. A copy of his remarks is attached.

Amanda Pereira and Gollone Moore, representing Young Voices, thanked the Regents for including some of their suggestions for changes to the educator evaluation standards and urged the Regents to re-consider issues related to the enforcement of the regulations and how student and parent input is actually going to be used.

Note: The next group of speakers came to the meeting to urge the Board of Regents to support the Hope High School students and faculty by not allowing the Providence Public School District to change the current schedule to a traditional seven period schedule. The names of the students, parents and faculty members that spoke are as follows: Marianne Davidson, Valerie Klein, William Buchanan, Jennifer Sanchez, Yariel Pearson, Angela Aup, Dorcus Metcalf, Rachel Moran, Laura Travis, Megan Thoma, Robin Maguire, Laura Maxwell and Clifton Boyle. Their written remarks are attached. Chairman Flanders urged the members of the group to bring their concerns to the Superintendent and Providence School Committee and told them that the Commissioner would monitor the situation and follow up with the Superintendent.

Mary Ryan, parent/home educator, addressed the Regents on her concerns about the proposed strategic plan. She specifically expressed concern that the plan does not appear to include any reference to parent involvement.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders reported that he and the Commissioner had attended the Governor's press conference to celebrate the bill signing for several education-related laws that will continue the advancement of education reform in Rhode Island. He commented that these bills will lead to more learning time for students, better training for teachers, and opportunities for early college entry and completion.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of November 5, 2009; November 5, 2009, Executive Session; and November 19, 2009, Work Session

Chairman Flanders presented the minutes of the November 5, 2009 meeting; the November 5, 2009, Executive Session; and the November 19, 2009, work session for approval.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Minutes of the November 5, 2009 meeting; the November 5, 2009 Executive Session; and the November 19, 2009 work session, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeals

Chairman of the Board of Regents Appeals Committee, Amy Beretta, presented each of the three appeals for approval, as follows:

William Hicks v. The Cumberland School Committee, 2007

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the Matter of William Hicks v. the Cumberland School Committee, the Commissioner's decision [12/17/07] is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

William Hicks v. The Cumberland School Committee, 2008

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the matter of William Hicks v. the Cumberland School Committee, the Commissioner's decision [2/17/08] is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Student S. Doe v. Warwick School Department

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the Matter of Student S. Doe v. Warwick School Department, the Commissioner's decision is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of FY 2010 Revised Budget and FY 2011 Budget

Commissioner Gist presented the FY 2011 and FY 2010 revised budgets, as attached, for approval. She reminded the Regents that the budgets were reviewed in detail and discussed at the November 19 work session. She then highlighted the details of the proposal as follows:

- The FY 2011 budget submission provides an overall \$26.6M increase over the FY 2010 enacted budget.
- The budget level funds education aid, but requests that the professional development fund that was eliminated last year be restored if funding becomes available.
- The budget includes a nominal increase for the Central Falls school district (\$1.3M), an increase in charter school aid to accommodate growth in grade levels at new and existing schools and other data updates (\$7.3M), and an increase in school construction aid for recently completed projects (\$10.2M).
- The FY 2011 budget reduces the Department's budget by \$1.0M and allows for modest increases in the budgets for the Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and the William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School which will allow these state-operated schools to, at best, maintain current services.
- The FY 2010 revised budget provides a decrease of \$4.8M when compared to the FY 2010 enacted budget. The budget reduces the Department and state schools \$1.5M, school construction aid \$3.2M, and other select programs \$0.2M.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves and Transmits the Regents' FY 2011 and FY 2010 Revised Budget Proposals, as attached.

VOTE: Approved 6 – 1 [Regent Callahan vote against the motion]

Approval of Table of Organization

Commissioner Gist reminded the Board that the Table of Organization is being presented for approval tonight to coincide with the submission of the FY 2010 revised and FY 2011 budgets. She said that the organization is being restructured to reflect the priorities of the strategic plan and to account for the current constraint on resources. Staffing of this structure will require the recruitment of staff with specific expertise and the transfer of staff from one office to another. Staff can expect to be assigned to work on specific projects outside of the confines of their offices.

Major changes include: within the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, a center for accountability and quality assurance will be created to build capacity for data analysis and transformation; create a division focused on accelerating school performance to ensure that all schools and programs are accelerating student achievement and closing achievement gaps; and create a division of educator excellence and instructional effectiveness which will work to ensure that all educators will be effective and committed to accelerating student performance and that all students have access to rigorous curricula aligned to internationally benchmarked standards. This organization will work with all districts, state schools in need of support, private and nonpublic schools.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Table of Organization, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Educator Code of Responsibility

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that on August 8th, the Regents approved the Educator Code of Professional Responsibility and the RI Educator Evaluation System Standards for public comment and that two public hearings were then held where we heard from more than 55 students, parents, educators, and community members. The Code of Professional Responsibility applies equally to all certified educators, whether life certified or just beginning their careers. It literally codifies existing requirements for holding an educator certificate, as more generally expressed in the 1896 law requiring all teachers to “cultivate in the minds of all children the principles of morality and virtue.” She emphasized to the group that Rhode Island is long overdue in providing all educators with a clearer set of standards of professional practice. Once approved, the Code becomes effective immediately. The manner in which it may be used by RIDE and by employers will be the subject of continued work over the next few months. Guidance will be provided to districts and a work session will be scheduled in the spring to discuss the protocols and procedures for the uses of this document.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility, as presented, and that said code be added to all certification and licensing requirements.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Educator Evaluation Standards

Next, the Commissioner presented the Educator Evaluation Standards for approval. She reminded the Board that the evaluation standards are exactly that – standards – and that their use should be considered similar to the manner in which the Program Approval Standards are used to gauge the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The Board discussed at length all of the suggested changes at the November 19th work session. The Department will develop timelines and guidance documents, including rubrics and model processes, at the agency level, as needed to ensure the timely adherence of district practice to these standards. The group discussed in detail Standard 1.3 – “This standard established four broad areas of performance that should provide the focus for all educator evaluation. Testimony and research all support the need to place student improvement as the primary measure of effectiveness.” A sentence added to standard 1.3: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth.” Regents expressed their concern about the wording of the added sentence. The discussion involved the use of “student growth” versus student achievement.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Amendment to Standard 1.3 of the Board of Regents document, “Annotated Changes to RI Educator Evaluation System Standards” to read as follows: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement.”

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards, as amended.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Strategic Plan Update

Commissioner Gist reported on the progress of the strategic plan, as follows:

- The Strategic Plan has been posted on the web-site for public comment starting November 23, 2009 and will end at the end of this month.
- The Department has received comments from members of the Board of Regents as well as superintendents and internal RIDE staff. These comments have been helpful to clarify and improve the plan.
- We will be adding an additional strategy under Educator Excellence that attends to the role of the state in professional development. This will be under Objective 3.
- The completed Strategic Plan will be brought to the Board of Regents for approval in January 2010.

Race to the Top Update

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that Race to the Top funds are a \$4.3 billion education reform fund that is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funds will be distributed in two phases – Phase I applications will be due in early 2010 and awarded in April, 2010. Phase II will be due in late spring 2010 and awarded in September. Rhode Island’s application will propose initiatives and strategies as part of a 3-tier plan -- 1) Standards and systems to support and guide every educator in RI and to build statewide capacity; 2) Opportunities for additional resources,

tools, and training to enhance innovation and quality; 3) Deep interventions to turn around RI's struggling schools. She also reported that there have been great turnouts at the community forums – 100 to 140 people at each of the three. We have heard strong ideas about what it means to be effective as a teacher or principal; that communities want to be involved; more user-friendly data systems equal better communication; and better direction around assessment is desired.

As per RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2), the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m. into Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 5:55 p.m.

Chairman Flanders reported that during Executive Session there were no votes taken.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.